

TESTIMONY to the Appropriations Committee

February 16, 2017

Re: Governor's budget proposal

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Executive Director

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opposition to proposed Medicaid cuts in the Governor's proposed budget and our support for maintaining DSS staffing levels. We at the CT Health Policy Project have worked for eighteen years to expand access to quality, affordable health care for every state resident. Over the last six years, we have worked closely with the state's Medicaid program to achieve nationally-recognized improvements in access to high quality care and engage more providers to participate in the program, all while controlling costs and enrolling 200,000 new members. Savings to the program from these efforts approach \$500 million in just four years.¹ We are proud of Connecticut Medicaid's success and are concerned that the Governor's proposed cuts will undermine that progress.

We strongly oppose the proposal to reduce HUSKY eligibility for working parents to 138% of the federal poverty level, eliminating coverage for 9,500 people. Given that only 16% of the 18,903 even higher income working parents cut from the program last summer were able to secure coverage from Access Health CT², Connecticut's federally subsidized insurance exchange, it is even less likely that lower income working families will be able to afford coverage in the exchange. For example, in a quick search of Access Health CT's website³, a currently covered HUSKY parent living in a family of three in Hartford county with an annual income of \$37,000, would have to pay \$3,597 (9.7% of income) in annual premiums for the lowest cost Silver plan with a deductible of \$4,000 and an out-of-pocket annual maximum of \$7,150. This is clearly not affordable for families struggling to meet basic needs, forcing responsible parents to forego coverage. The risk to the health and family finances of uninsured parents can be catastrophic, compromising entire families' futures. The impact on stressed safety net providers of increased demand as well as higher bad debt and uncompensated care impacts us all.

We also oppose the Governor's proposal to cap adult Medicaid dental services at \$1,000 per year. Dental service needs over that limit are not uncommon, but good oral health is a good investment. Adequate dental care is not only important to good oral health, but there is growing evidence of links to other areas of health such as heart disease and pre-term and low-weight births. Connecticut has worked hard to improve access to oral health care

¹ CT Health Policy Project, January 2016,
http://www.cthealthpolicy.org/pdfs/201701_medicaid_spending_myths_busted.pdf

² HUSKY A Parent Transition, DSS, December 2016,
https://www.cga.ct.gov/med/council/2016/1209/20161209ATTACH_HUSKY%20A%20Transitions%20Presentation.pdf

³ Searched February 15, 2017

over the last decade with nationally-recognized results. It would be unwise to unravel that progress and risk much higher medical costs, as well as the human impact of untreated dental disease.

We strongly support the Governor's proposal to maintain current staffing levels at DSS. The agency is currently understaffed and under two federal court orders. Any further reduction in staffing risks federal intervention and reversal of recent hard-won progress in the Medicaid program.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the health of every Connecticut resident. I urge you to oppose the Governor's proposed Medicaid cuts and preserve DSS staffing levels.